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WHO IS HE?

AN APPEAL TO THOSE WHO REGARD WITH ANY DOUBT

THE NAME OF

JESUS.

Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?—JOHN ix. 35, 36.

BY

S. F. SMILEY.

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It does not lie within the purpose of this work to meet the cavils of those who hold themselves in resolute hostility to the Gospel. It appeals only to such as are earnest in their inquiries, and who prize, above any mere pleasantness of Opinion, the honesty of Truth.

Nor does its scope admit of more than a general recognition of all those practical bearings of the Gospel, which fill the Christian's life, as the working out of his salvation. There has been therefore no attempt to travel round the vast circumference of Truth, but only to survey steadily Him who is its Centre.

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WHO IS HE?

I.

WHO is He? In this one short and simple question may be gathered up the complex doubts and difficulties of many hearts. In it we may hear the cry which now again, as often in the past, appeals the most loudly to the Church of Christ. If, as has been said by one who spoke advisedly of the ever-downward tendency of an age of doubt, it must come at last to this—"Is there a God?"—then surely when this most solemn of all verities is established, the next hold in the upward reaching must be upon Him who stands confessedly in some relation or other between God and man;—Who is He?

In that artless narrative of the fourth Gospel,

in which we find the question, we can trace in him who asked it a slowly growing certainty of knowledge, ending in clear and full belief. He had been born blind; and to the question of the Jews, "How were thine eyes opened?" he first answered, "*A man that is called Jesus* made clay and anointed mine eyes." Soon after he said of Jesus, "*He is a prophet;*" and again, "*If this man were not of God, He could do nothing.*" Then when the Jews had cast him out of the synagogue for these sayings, Jesus found him and asked him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He answered and said, "*Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?*" And Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." And he said, "*Lord, I believe.*" And he worshipped Him.

John ix. 1-38.

And who is He, that we also might believe on Him? Is it not the suppressed sigh of thousands? And the yearning hearts of the young at least are audibly uttering it. Weary of groping from doubt to doubt along a still darker and more uncertain way, you are longing for the sure foothold and firm grasp of faith, where from one conviction to another you may climb upward to

the light. But is there such a path? you ask. The whole Christian world is full of the stir and tumult of contending parties. All seem equally certain that they alone are on the side of truth; and some say one thing and some another. Is there any possibility of certain knowledge? Who, indeed, is He, that we may doubt no more, but may believe?

Now, upon such a question what testimony shall we receive? In the things of God no evidence can be sure that does not come from God; for none of us has ever entered heaven to bring back its secrets; none of us has ever beheld God that we should make known his nature; and as no creature below man can understand man, so no more can man by himself comprehend a Being so far above him as God. Or, to borrow a more sententious language in which the same necessity was long ago argued, "No man hath ascended up to heaven." "No man hath seen God at any time." "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." All, then, that we can possibly know of Him beyond the infer-

John iii. 13.
John i. 18.
1 Cor. ii. 11.

ence of "His eternal power and Godhead" from His visible works, must be by manifestation or by revelation. The Holy Scriptures contain the record of the one under the seal of the other. First prophecy prepared the way with its ante-

John iii. 13. John i. 18. cedent proofs. Then One "came down from heaven." The only begotten Son declared the Father. In *some* sense (it would anticipate too much to define it closely)

1 Tim. iii. 16. "God was manifest in the flesh." No speech nor language could set forth the fulness of God, and when at last it was to

Heb. i. 2. John i. 14. be uttered, it was spoken by a life,—"The Word of God." Then, through the Apostles were still further made known "the wisdom of God," and "the deep things of God," and also "things to come;" which God so revealed

1 Cor. ii. 1-16. unto them by His Spirit, that they had "the mind of Christ."

In this volume of recorded facts and revealed truths, we find then the evidence we are in search of. Yet here an objection may meet us.

1 Cor. ii. 14. These things of God are "spiritually discerned," and to *our* spirits also they must be revealed by His Spirit; therefore does not the inward witness supersede the out-

ward testimony? But important as is the work of the Spirit upon the individual mind, and presumptuous as it would be to limit His power in the direct illumination of the soul, yet how can we possibly appeal to such an influence as an authority for doctrine? Were this the only channel of Divine Revelation, what false and conflicting claims—all resting on no other evidence than the word of each man or the agreement of a few—would abound in the world, with no hope of refutation left us! While a written record, given forth by this same Spirit for all men to believe, supplies just such a universal standard as we need. Nor is it taking aught from the high prerogatives of the Holy Spirit to receive as His own work the Holy Scriptures; to believe that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" while we admit that the Spirit now completes the mission of revealing the things of God, by adding to this outward evidence the power of spiritual reception, and so applying the truths of which they wrote directly to our own souls, according to the need of each.

But if we do not receive the Bible as a true

record, what else have we to found any religion upon? There must be some proof to satisfy our minds. No reasonable being is required to believe anything without evidence of its truth. And once rejecting the Holy Scripture, or even reversing its rule to receive its testimony, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God," where then in Nature, in Reason, or in Experience is there any solid proof whatever that we have immortal souls to be saved, and that there is a way in which to save them? Nor can we partly receive and partly reject this revelation. It claims for itself to be as complete as it is true. The solemn warning which closes its final prophecy—that none should add and none should take away from its words—covers most obviously *all* that has the same authorship. No power of selection is allowed us with any portion of it. We must receive it as a whole or reject it as a whole. And to be consistent in such a rejection, one would have to set aside also every conclusion which it authorized, and place himself precisely on a level with the heathen as respects the knowledge of heavenly things.

1 Thess. ii. 13.

Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

All that the world at large has gained through

even a very partial reception of that wisdom which it teaches—all the fertilizing streams of influence that have flowed from this fountain, in the wider prevalence of truth and justice, in the amelioration of human wrongs and sufferings, in a higher moral standard, and in the love and gentleness it has fostered—all this we must reject as a delusion also; or else account that those things which are noblest and loveliest upon this our earth, rest on no surer foundation than a fable or falsehood—that man's highest prosperity depends upon his being most foolishly deceived.

It is true that, since the final seal was set to their inspiration, the Holy Scriptures have had to come down to us through the often dark and troubled years of eighteen centuries. But in their faithful transmission, and the general accuracy of their translations, we can find traces of a Divine Providence still caring for the priceless treasure which was entrusted seemingly to human hands. The external evidences which sustain their authenticity are among the strongest known to History, and lie open to any ordinary intelligence. But in the vast results which their reception has effected in the world, and still more in their marvelous fitness to our own natures—

to the depth of our need, to the height of our longing, and throughout the whole range of the daily-widening interests of life, we find other evidence; and all combined so solid a structure that the hand must be rash indeed that would think to shake it. And though the highest confirmation of all is only to be reached through spiritual experience, yet the lower proofs are amply sufficient for the place they fill.

Let it be supposed, then, that the testimony of the Holy Scriptures is freely accepted as conclusive. A wide field of doubt may still lie open in their interpretation; and how, it may be asked, among all the different constructions given to its words, can we find our answer to the question, Who is He? But how hopeful does this inquiry become as we consider that on this important subject they themselves profess to furnish a direct and explicit testimony, and that among all the high objects kept steadily in view, the pre-eminence is ever assigned to this!

In the New Testament, not only is it announced, either directly or indirectly, that the design of each Gospel is to tell of Jesus Christ, of "all that He began both to do and teach"—not only are there four successive histories of His

life, that so we "might know the certainty of these things," but an ultimate purpose is disclosed. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." The Acts of the Apostles give us also the most direct views of His person and offices in a record of the early preaching of the Gospel. The Epistles—nearly all beginning with the announcement of their writers as commissioned servants of Jesus Christ, and ending with ascriptions to Him or blessings in His name—are also filled with declarations of what He is, and what He has done, and the results of faith in Him. Then, finally, the closing book of the New Testament is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"—a prophecy of Him in the future as the other portions are His record for the past.

John xx. 31.

And as respects the Old Testament, Jesus Christ and His Apostles constantly appealed to it as the only evidence of the kind then available. To the Jews, in their exasperation at His making himself equal with God, Jesus answered, "Search the Scriptures. . . . *They are they which testify of me.*" When ap-

John v. 18, 39.

pearing to His disciples after His resurrection, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he ex-

Luke xxiv. 27.

pounded unto them in all the Scriptures, *the things concerning Himself*." And again He said, "All things must

Luke xxiv. 44.

be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, *concerning me*." It was out of these Scriptures of the Old Testament that the Apostles reasoned, and "mightily convinced the Jews," "showing that Jesus was Christ." And one of them, linking the office of the written word with the preaching of Jesus Christ, declares that thus the revelation of the mystery so long kept secret is "now made manifest, and

Rom. xvi. 26.

by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*."

Now, if a volume of such size has indeed been written by inspiration of God, at such different periods of time, and through so many of His servants, and all this chiefly to testify of Christ, to make Him known for the obedience of faith, it would be strange indeed if its many pages nowhere furnished a clear answer to the question,

Who is He? If it does not do more than this, and place that view of Him which it designs to give beyond all doubt to an unprejudiced mind, then an imperfection, that would inevitably condemn any work of human authorship, is found in one the source of which is divine.

If, however, we expect to find, in addition to what the Scriptures reveal as true of Jesus Christ, a solution also of every difficulty that reason can suggest, we then ask too much. We receive, without any such demand, the facts of science and the phenomena of nature—even those which no human intellect can fathom and explain, and some of which seem even contradictory. Both in the world of matter and in the world of mind we find sooner or later a limit to our powers of thought. And if it be so with things created, how must we expect the mystery to deepen when we turn to their Creator! "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." An infinite mind, in the very nature of things, is beyond the

Job xi. 7–9.

grasp of a finite mind. Nor are we called upon to believe what we cannot fully comprehend, upon any less authority than a Divine Revelation. Of that revelation by far the larger portion is clear and intelligible, and in the fullest sense reasonable. That it *is* a revelation sufficiently justifies all the remaining difficulties. It is no Arch-Deceiver that gives the challenge, bidding Reason halt, while summoning our Faith to pass on alone into dim, uncertain regions; but it is a Guide from heaven that, leading Reason on far as her foot can follow, then points out to the keener eye of Faith *the things beyond*. It is the very triumph of Wisdom to await calmly the promised possession of higher powers. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Nor is this growth in knowledge wholly reserved for a future world. For even as a child in his early lessons has often to apply the rules which he cannot yet understand, their practical working being his first need, so is it with the learner of divine truth. That truth grows clearer through its constant application; even as Jesus said, "If any man will *do* His

1 Cor. xiii. 12.

will, he shall know of the doctrine; whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John vii. 17. And let it be borne steadily in mind that, with whatever plausible theories of our own we attempt to remove these difficulties, we are driven directly to this alternative; the fallible judgment of man on the one side; on the other, the infallible word of God. Let it be remembered, also, as we advance to the consideration of the testimony of Holy Scripture, that however great the perplexity which detached passages may offer, whatever doubt may rest upon the correct rendering of some, or even the genuineness of a very few, yet still, if the cumulative evidence of many other portions sustain the same truth, such an uncertainty leaves us absolutely nothing with which to oppose it. No doctrine of vital importance is found dependent upon a single sentence; and it would appear reasonable to somewhat adjust our estimate of the relative importance of these Divine teachings by the very frequency of their repetition.

II.

WHO is He, then? What saith the Scripture? "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." "All things were created by Him, and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

John i. 3.

Col. i. 16, 17.

Can we not understand, then, how, in perfect accordance with these words, we read in the record of our creation, "And God* said, Let *us* make man in *our* image after *our* likeness"? And does it not accord with this that the prophet Micah, in fixing the birthplace of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, said, "Out of thee shall He come forth, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;" and that Isaiah gave among the august names of the child that should

Gen. i. 26.

Micah v. 2.

* Elohim, the plural expression for God, is used here and often elsewhere.

be born, one that made Him known as "the Everlasting Father"?

Isa. ix. 6.

Oh call not then any longer Him a creature who is thy Creator! Call Him not a finite man, for man is but of yesterday, and his "days upon earth are a shadow."

Job viii. 9.

But this thou mayst say of Him—in inspired words of praise, that a Psalmist used when he called upon his God, and then an Apostle used as he spoke of Christ—"Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest. . . . Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

Ps. cii. 26, 27. Heb. i. 10-12.

Who is He? One like thyself—a *subject* of "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God?" Does any word of His, spoken in the days of His humiliation, tempt thee to such a thought? Hear, then, the Apostle Peter as he fearlessly speaks of "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Hear the prophet Daniel as he tells how he saw in the night visions, "And behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven. . . . And there was given

2 Pet. i. 11.

Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away; and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Listen to the Angel as he announces to Mary, His mother—"He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Dan. vii. 13, 14.

Luke i. 33.

Note also how boldly, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the words of the psalmist are declared to be written of Christ—"Unto *the Son* he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." And then look at Him, who in the vision of John, is seen with a vesture dipped in blood and followed by the armies in heaven; and read the name written upon his vesture and on his thigh—"KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS." And that there be no doubt who He is who bears this name, read yet again where it is said of *the Lamb*, *He* is Lord of lords and King of kings. Does not this suffice? Then hearken yet again as Isaiah the prophet tells of the awful glory of that

Heb. i. 8.

Rev. xix. 16.

Rev. xvii. 14.

vision, when he "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up;" while the seraphim cried one unto another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." The prophet in his fear exclaims, "Woe is me! for I am undone; . . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." A message is given him; "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed but understand not; and see ye indeed but perceive not." Now this very message is spoken of by John as fulfilled when, "though Jesus had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him;" and after giving in full this prophecy of their blindness and hardness in rejecting Him, he pronounces the whole vision a revelation of Christ, by adding, "These things said Esaias, when he saw *His* glory, and spake of *Him*."

Isa. vi. 1–9.

John xii. 41.

Who is He then? Oh answer like that Israelite, indeed, in whom was no guile—"Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

John i. 49.

And own Him not as thy King only, but as thy Judge. Do we find that prophecy fulfilled which foretold so minutely the sufferings of

Mic. v. 1. Matt. xxvii. 30. Jesus—"They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek,"—then let us consider that other prophecies await their no less sure fulfilment;—that it is written, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that it is written, "We must all appear 2 Cor. v. 10. before the judgment seat of Christ;" that it is written again in words as clear as they are solemn, "The Lord Jesus Christ 2 Tim. iv. 1. . . . . shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom."

And therefore let thy faith in Him be the faith of one, who, hanging on a cross beside Him, while the rulers derided Him, and the Soldiers mocked Him, and the other malefactor railed on Him, yet said unto Jesus, "Lord re- Luke xxiii. 42. member me, *when thou comest into thy kingdom.*"

III.

WHO is He? Is there yet a doubt? Why does He call Himself the Son of man? Blessed be His name, He was the Son of man! But could the words spoken of Him as man be spoken of any other of all the sons of men? The prophet Isaiah foretold Him as a man—but, oh, such a man!—"A man shalt be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!" Isa. xxxii. 2.

The promise of God is heard ages before His appearing. "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir;" and His herald proclaims His nearer coming—"The man that is *my fellow*, saith the Lord of hosts." Isa. xiii. 12. Zech. xiii. 7.

He called himself indeed the Son of man—but how?—"The Son of man hath power on

Matt ix. 6. earth to forgive sins." "The Son of
Matt. xx. 28. man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many." The Son of man shall send forth *His* angels, and they shall gather out of
Matt. xiii. 41. *His* kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity." And again, "When the Son of man shall come in
Matt. xxv. 31. His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, *then* shall He sit upon *the throne of His glory*." The Son of man, indeed; but not even then limited to a human existence upon earth; for He said, "No man
John iii. 13. hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even *the Son of man which is in heaven*." And His very being as man gives Him a right to be also the Judge of man; for He speaks of the
John v. 27. Father as giving Him authority to execute judgment also, *because* He was the Son of man. Having often foretold that the Son of man should "first suffer many things, and be rejected and be slain," there came a time
John xii. 23. when He could say, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." And in that glory Stephen beheld Him when he said, "Behold, I see the heavens

opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Acts vii. 56. And in that glory John saw Him—still, "like unto the Son of man," but "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength," and "His voice as the sound of many waters;" while He proclaimed to the disciple who had so often leaned on Jesus' bosom, but now, when he saw Him, fell at His feet as dead, "I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. i. 13–18. The Apostles speak of Him as man, but the words they use most plainly indicate an assumed nature. They speak of Him as "made in the likeness of men," as "being found in fashion as a man," as becoming a partaker of flesh and blood. But they say also that through *this man* the forgiveness of sins is preached, and by *that man* will the world be judged. They say that "*this man*, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; Heb. x. 12, 13. from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool."

Thus do all the Scriptures speak of Him,

whom it behooved in all things to be made like unto his brethren—of "the last Adam"—"the second man, the Lord from heaven;" the "one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;" "the days-man betwixt us that can lay His hand upon us both."

What shall we say then but this?—borrowing the assurance of Divine Inspiration upon a truth which its plainest declarations leave unexplained—that while He was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh," He was also declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;" that so He has passed into the heavens as our "Great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God"—a Son of man, who gives to as many as receive Him and believe on His name, power to become the sons of God! Behold the Man!

Rom. i. 3, 4.

John i. 12.

And, O doubting heart! wilt thou not say as the Centurion said, when he stood over against the cross of Jesus, and saw Him give up the ghost, "Truly THIS MAN *was the* SON OF GOD!"

Mark xv. 39.

IV.

BUT who is He? What shall be said then of those solemn assertions of the unity of the Godhead: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is *one* Lord"— "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another." Shall there be another God save Him? Shall He be robbed of any portion of His glory? What saith the Scripture? Did Jesus Christ claim to be another? Did He not say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"—"I and my Father are One." Did He therefore rob the Father of His glory, when He declared it as His own will, "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father?" Did the Apostles proclaim another when they said of Jesus Christ, "Who is over all, God blessed for ever;" and "This is the true God and eternal life;" and ascribed "to the only wise

Deut. vi. 4. Isa. xlii. 8.

John xiv. 9. John x. 30.

John v. 23.

Rom. ix. 5.

1 John v. 20. Jude 25.

God our Saviour glory and majesty, dominion and power?"

Did the Apostle Paul rob the Father of His glory, and give it to another, when, after speaking of Him, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, . . . humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" he goes on to say, in rapt and glowing language, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." What though Jehovah had said by His prophet, "There is no God else beside *me*. *Look unto me* and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is *none else*. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, that *unto me* every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear,"—yet it is still no robbery

Phil. ii. 6-11.

Isa. xlv. 21-23.

that the name at which we bow should be the name of Jesus, and that the solemn confession of every tongue should be that Jesus Christ is Lord. Even this is "*to the glory of God the Father.*" In the very strength of these declarations of His unity—"*no God else beside me*"—"*none else*"—"*look unto me and be ye saved*"—we find fresh authority for receiving, with no diluted meaning, the words of His Apostle, "God was manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. iii. 16. The most critical reading might possibly reject some of these expressions, and the most candid interpretation might find precedent elsewhere for giving a lower significance to others. But there is a consistency in them as a whole that defies rejection, by presenting to those who solve their difficulties thus, still greater ones. That there is a sense, and a high and true one, in which the Father and the Son may be spoken of as "One"—"One God"—that there is also a sense in which they must be distinguished, in which the Son, as taking upon Him our nature also, fills for a time a subordinate and dependent place—is the great mystery which human phrases, for the most part, confuse. The only illustration which it seems to admit, is the recognition of

similar mysteries elsewhere. The sacred writers announce it boldly, and then leave it. In the words already partially repeated, neither the Psalmist nor the Apostle pauses to explain the sudden transition of the name of God from One who is addressed to the One who speaks: "Unto the Son, He saith, Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever; . . . Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore *God, even thy God*, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." And so, in the words of Jesus, He no less freely acknowledges the earthly humiliation—"My Father is greater than I"—than, seeing the hour of His change coming, He calmly claims the heavenly honors that had been ever His; in words of prayer, indeed, but such a prayer as none of us could dare to make our own: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me *with thine own self*, with *the glory which I had with thee before the world was*."

Heb i. 8, 9.

John xiv. 28.

John xvii. 5.

Who is He, then? Oh, remember that it was one who doubted—one to whom the risen Jesus showed the print of the nails in His hands, the deep wound of the spear in His side—the marks

of His suffering humanity—who yet answered and said unto Him, "My Lord and my God!" Thou canst not see Him like Thomas, that thou mayst believe; yet remember that Jesus said to him, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

John xx. 26-29.

V.

WHO is He? What more must we learn of Christ? Owning Him as our Creator, as our King, as our Judge—ready to answer to His question—"Whom say ye that I am?" "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—shrinking not to say with His apostle—"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—what shall next be added to such names as these? Let us turn to the words of that disciple whose full faith and full confession were so honored by his Lord as to draw from Him that strong assertion—"Upon this rock I will build my Church." The forgiven, converted Peter becomes the foremost Apostle. What more will he now say of that Jesus who has been crucified and risen from the dead? "Neither is there *salvation* in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be *saved*."

Matt. xvi. 16.

Col. ii. 9.

Matt. xvi. 15-18

Acts iv. 12.

At the coming of Christ upon earth it was *a Saviour* and *His salvation* that both angels and prophets announced. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," said Gabriel to Mary, His mother, "for He shall save His people from their sins." Matt. i. 21. "Good tidings of great joy," said the angel of the Lord unto the shepherds, sore afraid as the glory of the Lord shone round about them—"Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, *a Saviour*, which is Christ the Lord." And Luke ii. 9-11. when Simeon, to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, came by the Spirit into the Temple, what saw he there as the object of these special revelations, made repeatedly to one who waited for the consolation of Israel? "*The child Jesus*," brought there according to the custom of the law—only to human sight a little helpless infant of but three-and-thirty-days, out of that life of three-and-thirty years. Lev. xii. 1-6. Yet he took Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen *Thy salvation*." Luke ii. 29, 30.

"*An horn of salvation*," said Zacharias, as he prophesied, filled with the Holy Ghost, "has God raised up for us." The mercy long promised was to be now performed—"that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life." Such was the salvation; and it was honor enough for his own child, over whose birth he was rejoicing to give knowledge of it, as "the prophet of the Highest."

Luke i. 67-79.

And with what strength and emphasis of language do all the Apostles speak of Him as the Saviour! "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world *to save sinners*." "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be *the Saviour of the world*." "Wherefore He is able also to *save them to the uttermost* that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

1 Tim. i. 15.

1 John iv. 14.

Heb. vii. 25.

Can we not believe on Him for these sayings, until, through a closer and more personal knowledge, we can say, as the Samaritans whom a

woman of their city had told of Christ: "*Now* we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, *the Saviour of the world*." John iv. 39-42.

VI.

AND how is it that He saves us?—for this is but another phase of our question, Who is He? There are who call Him Saviour, and are willing to take Him as their blessed Example; or still further to recognize the attractive power and vast moral influence of His life and death in stirring our hearts through such sublime self-sacrifice to a kindred devotion. There are those who claim that a warm personal attachment to Him, in whose character they find their loftiest ideal, and then to humanity for His sake, has power, when carried to the pitch of passionate enthusiasm, to purify the soul and raise it above the reach of temptation. And there are others who own Him as their Saviour, but look for His salvation solely in the cleansing power of His Holy Spirit; yet all agreeing in this, that His sufferings and death upon the cross and the blood which He shed on Calvary, whatever their deep significance, were not the

procuring causes of our salvation—not the basis of our acceptance with God—not that by which we are justified—not the proper objects of our faith.

And here upon this ground we find ourselves in the very thick of the battle—the fight of faith. Unbelief has recalled her forces from the too exposed front of the mere humanity of Christ, and holds them now in the shelter of a dubious Cross, an heroic sacrifice. She loudly vaunts that thus she protects the very highest morality, and she dares to call it holiness. She scoffs like a Goliath at those who confess so much of sin and its forgiveness, and taunts them with a righteousness not real, because it is imputed. Yet the humblest believer may find his ready and sufficient defence, "the smooth stones of the brook," lying everywhere along that blessed stream of Divine Inspiration, which he knows so well for its gladness and refreshment.

Therefore again let us ask, What saith the Scripture? What is its repeated testimony? And if the objection be ever springing up that the words we read are but a figure, that such modes of expression were usual with those who wrote the Scriptures, and are not to be received to the

letter, but must be applied with a meaning more intelligible or more spiritual, let us also consider in what a variety of ways we find the same truth repeated; in historic and ceremonial types, in figure, in allegory, in lofty strains of prophecy; but also in the simplest statement, the most unadorned language, the most close and solid argument. Can it indeed be possible that those Holy Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, after all present us only with a shadow of truth and leave us to look for the reality elsewhere—not in revelation, but in reason! If so, then surely that is not a "form of sound words," which we are exhorted to hold fast.

How then is it that He saves us? All proud philosophic systems, all notions of mere natural exaltation, all self-reliant schemes whatever, are utterly swept away before the irresistible power of one simple saying—"By *grace* are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is *the gift of God*." The same truth appears, more expanded and wondrously guarded from all one-sidedness, in the Epistle to Titus—"After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

Eph. ii. 8.

not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Not our works, not our righteousness; for there behind, whatever the present life, is the old score which had just been summed up—of the foolish, the disobedient, the deceived—serving pleasure or something worse than pleasure, living in malice and envy, hating one another. The debt due upon this long account—which is signed by no base criminal, but by an Apostle for himself and such as he—must be met. And so it is *Mercy* that saves us—*Grace* that justifies us. And yet we are saved in a way that secures a life wholly new, and the constant support and development of that life; or regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is this great result of real holiness which is here spread out before us as it flows down to us with its abundant outpouring* *through* Jesus Christ our Sa-

Titus iii. 4–7.

Titus iii. 3.

* Ἐξέχεεν.

viour. Let us now turn elsewhere to trace the Fountain-head so clearly indicated.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, up to a certain point he recognized his divine character and mission—"We know that thou art *a Teacher* come from God." A Teacher; and so doubtless he was eager to learn from Him, and to add some new merit, it might be, to the already solid groundwork of his own religious character. With what amazement must he have heard the words that taught him that, instead of adding to his knowledge, the very foundations of his faith had yet to be laid! that, instead of coming to Jesus as a Teacher, as a condemned man he must come to Him as a Saviour to find life itself! "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto *thee*, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The objection, the difficulty, the seeming impossibility, call forth the reassertion of its absolute necessity. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Of water and of the Spirit:" what is this but the same process which we have before consid-

John iii. 3.

John iii. 5.

ered—the laver of regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Ghost. But, now, in what follows we find our Lord giving us a further answer as to how it is that He saves us. Let us follow reverently whither He leads us to look upon the Source of all our life: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." What did that serpent of brass do for the stricken, dying Israelite? "*It shall come to pass*," said the Lord to Moses, "that *every one* that is bitten, *when he looketh upon it* SHALL LIVE." Read the words of Jesus again, and trace the likeness: "That *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but *have eternal life*." What then the looking upon the serpent did, the believing in Jesus does. What that did for the body, this does for the soul. It heals the deadly wound of sin. It gives eternal life. Nor need we pry too curiously behind that promise, "*It shall come to pass*." They tasted not their remedy; they touched it not. Only the eye could reach that distant serpent of brass set

John iii. 14, 15.

Num. xxi. 8.

John iii. 15.

* Λοντροῦ παλεγγενεσίας.

up upon its pole. But nevertheless it came to pass, that as they looked, they lived. In a far-off land, and in an age now dim with distance, the Son of Man was lifted up upon His Cross; and still it comes to pass that as we look and believe *we live*. And to the end of the world will the call of Christ crucified be heard: "A Saviour! there is none beside me! Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth!"

Isa. xlv. 21, 22.

And now are there other ways, or is this the only way? On a subject so solemn, so fraught with life and death, let the Saviour Himself answer, even as He did to Nicodemus: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Condemned already! And only one way of escape is shown us—to believe on the Son of man who was lifted up—in the Saviour, who said, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, *then* shall ye know that I am He;" "If ye believe *not* that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

John iii. 18.

John viii. 28.

John viii. 24.

And it was such a Saviour, and such a salvation that had been foretold. In the book of Isaiah we find a prophecy of the humiliation of Christ—so strange a description of the coming Messiah, so wholly unlikely in itself to attract attention and be welcomed as true—that the prophet even begins by saying, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" What words are these?—"A tender plant"—"A root out of a dry ground," "with no form nor comeliness"—"no beauty that we should desire Him"—"despised and rejected"—"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—"oppressed and afflicted," "brought as a lamb to the slaughter"—"numbered with the transgressors." Nor is it merely shown that "He was despised and we esteemed Him not;" but also, "We did esteem Him stricken, *smitten of God*, and afflicted." For even from such a depth as this was to come up that cry, more fearful than the darkness over all the land, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" And why all this? Again and again in this remarkable chapter, in varied and emphatic language, we find the awful wherefore of this shame and

Matt. xxvii. 46.

Isa. liii. 1-12. suffering and death, even to a ninefold repetition:

"But *He* was wounded for *our* transgressions:
He was bruised for *our* iniquities:
The chastisement of *our* peace was upon *Him:*
With *His* stripes *we* are healed:
The Lord hath laid on *Him* the iniquity of *us all:*
For the transgression of *my people* was *He* smitten:
Thou shalt make *His* soul an offering for *sin:*
He shall bear *their* iniquities:
He bare the *sin of many*."

It is but the clearer development of this same truth when the Apostle Paul says of "Jesus our Lord"—"Who was *delivered for our offences*, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And this atonement, that "saves from wrath," and brings us to joy "in God"—this "counting of faith for righteousness,"—is a "free gift," offered to all—a world-wide remedy—bringing life to the many through the death of One. —"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." "This said Jesus, signifying what death He should die."

Rom. iv. 25 and v. 1.

Rom. iv. 5.

Rom. v. 11, 15.

John xii. 32, 33.

But how intense the interest added to those words of Isaiah, as we hear in the Acts of the Apostles of the man of Ethiopia, Candace's honored treasurer, returning from his worship in Jerusalem, and reading, as he sat in his chariot, this very place in the Scriptures. The Spirit who had inspired it eight hundred years before, gave now the command to Philip, "Go near and join thyself unto this chariot." "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" was the perplexed inquiry: "How can I understand except some man should guide me?" "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus." Acts viii. 26-39.

O thou who readest the same Scripture now, canst thou "believe with all *thine* heart?" Canst thou openly confess as he did, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" Canst thou believe that He who bare the sin of many, has borne *thy* sin? Then, as the Ethiop went upon his way rejoicing, so go thou also upon thy heavenward way, rejoicing in Christ Jesus—not seeing Him, indeed, but believing and loving, and rejoicing "with joy unspeakable and full of glory," "receiving the end of thy faith, even the salvation of thy soul." 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

VII.

NOR was it only by direct prophecy that Christ and His salvation were foretold. We find in Him the Antitype of almost countless types, each giving a glimpse of His fulness. Jesus has told us that Abraham rejoiced to see His day; that he saw it and was glad. May we not believe that others also saw through those fleeting shadows the eternal Truth? For there "sprang from him as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, who all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them." In that childhood of the Church they may have learned from such pictures what we now learn through words. They were taught, we know, the holiness of God, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the easy defilements that cut off their souls from blessing. Placed under a law that was "holy

John viii. 56.

Heb. xi. 12, 13.

and just and good," and yet "weak through the flesh"—consenting to it, but not performing it—two needs were constant and imperative—a priest and a sacrifice. The Scriptures leave us in no doubt at all as to the figurative nature of all these ordinances under the Old Covenant. But we are also forbidden to extend such an interpretation beyond its close. For fourteen hundred years the Lord thus trained for Himself a people by the law. Through fourteen hundred years of type and shadow, the blood of bullocks and of lambs had been flowing day by day, in obedience to His claim: "The life of the flesh is in the blood. It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Was it but a figure still, when John the Baptist cried at the coming of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?" A figure still, when Jesus said, "This is my blood of the new Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins?" Why, also, do we find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, continuous chapters contrasting the "figures for the time then present" and the "good things to come?" How sharply

Rom vii. 12-18.

Lev. xvii. 11.

John i. 29.

Matt. xxvi. 28.

the line is drawn between the "blood of goats and calves" and "His own blood"—between the patterns of things in the heavens, and "the heavenly things themselves" that were purified with better sacrifices, when Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. How firmly laid are those stepping-stones of argument, over which we are led from type to Antitype—from the old covenant to the new—from the law to Christ. First, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." But "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." Then, "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." Therefore, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." And finally, "Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Having brought us thus far, the Apostle now points out to us, in words of joyful assurance, that "new and living way," leading into the holiest, and declares that we may

Heb. ix. 1–26.

Heb. ix. 22.

Heb. x. 4.

Heb. x. 10.

Heb. x. 17.

Heb. x. 18.

Heb. x. 19, 20.

enter boldly by the blood of Jesus. Yet he lingers a moment for one more contrast—the death without mercy for the despiser of Moses' law, and the sorer punishment that awaited those, who sinning wilfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth, "counted the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing." Heb. x. 26-31.

And in no cautious phrases, with no hint of our danger in misapprehending them, do all the Apostles speak of this "one sacrifice for sins," and "the blood of the everlasting covenant."

What purged their conscience from dead works to serve the living God? "The blood of Christ." What cleansed them from all sin? "The blood of Jesus Christ." With what were His saints redeemed? "With the precious blood of Christ." How were they who once were far off made nigh? "By the blood of Christ." What was the purchase paid for the Church of God? "His own blood." How did they overcome "that old Serpent, called the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the

Heb. ix. 14.

1 John i. 7.

1 Pet. i. 19.

Eph. ii. 13.

Acts xx. 28.

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whole world"? "By the blood of the Lamb." Where did they wash their robes and make them white? "In the blood of the Lamb." Set forth as our propitiation, through faith in what were we to claim this? "Through faith in His blood." Justified freely by the grace of God, still by what is this effected? "Justified by His blood." Again, through what have we redemption and the forgiveness of sins? "Through His blood." "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." What promise is renewed in that?—what signifies that Passover? "*The blood* shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and *when I see the blood* I will *pass over you*."

Rev. xii. 9-11.
Rev. vii. 14.
Rom. iii. 25.
Rom. v. 9.
Eph. i. 7.
1 Cor. v. 7.
Ex. xii. 13.

We must admit indeed a partial metaphor in many of these expressions. But while the figures vary, the blood remains the same. There can be no literal sprinkling of it, no actual bathing in it; but take away the simple force of its own meaning, and what remains to cause one Apostle to pause, in the very beginning of a most practical Epistle, to dwell with exultation

on "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," and another to interrupt the brief preface of a most important revelation with an outburst of reverent thanksgiving, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins *in His own blood*"?

1 Pet. i. 1-21.

Rev. i. 5.

There is a very practical test of the meaning which we most naturally understand such words to convey, in the simple fact that those who do not thus accept them, avoid them. There is no significance left for which to cherish them. But they who have found "peace through the blood of His Cross," will not be slack to make mention of it. They will plead its power in their prayers. They will sound it in praise for ever.

Oh fear not then to draw nigh unto that Throne, in the midst of which stands "a Lamb as it had been slain," and to join thy voice with the voice of those who sing a new song—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation."

Rev. v. 6-9.

VIII.

BUT here we are met with a perplexity not thus easily removed—a perplexity perhaps the most widespread of all, and the more insinuating as it often owes its origin to a recoil from a mere mask of Faith, or a reaction from some overstrained dogma. Were it wholly a replying against God, one might well shrink to repeat such words. "Who is He, then?" it is said; "whom do you thus make this Saviour, but a Victim appeasing the wrath of God against sin, and averting His anger from us by the sacrifice of one so innocent and holy? Is this then the iron heel which is to crush our instinctive belief in the love and goodness of our Father, and doom us to struggle for ever with an irrepressible conviction of His cruelty? How could we accept salvation upon such terms? How could we selfishly rejoice in such injustice?" Alas! indeed, for those whose Bibles are but palimpsests! who find those broad lines of truth, and clear, bold characters of heavenly

wisdom, overwritten with the narrow creeds, and cramped, unsteady thoughts of men! Our appeal must be away from this, to that which was written by inspiration of God. We are searching for a God of love; and what say the Scriptures? They tell us that "God *so loved the world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. They tell us that "God *commendeth His love* toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 8. Turn where we will among such messages as these—"God is love," "Herein is love," "In this was manifested the love of God," "Hereby perceive we the love," "God even our Father which hath loved us," "God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us" 1 John iv. 8-10. 1 John iii. 16. 2 Thess. ii. 16. Eph. ii. 4. —and what is it that follows and supplies their point and proof? It is this gift of grace, this propitiation, this sending of His only begotten Son, this laying down of His life for us. And where is the suggestion of a forced sacrifice in any saying of the Saviour? We hear, in the language of prophecy, His ready words, "Lo, I

Ps. xl. 7, 8. come! . . . *I delight to do thy will*, O my God!" We hear him saying, John x. 15, 18. "I lay down my life for the sheep. . *I lay it down of myself*." The hour draws nigh for Him to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. Is there still no shrinking? We hear, as it were, His inmost musing—"Now is John xii. 27. my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: *but for this cause came I unto this hour*." And so of the Father we can say, "He Rom. viii. 32. that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." And Gal. ii. 20. of the Son we can say, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." In the perfect oneness of their nature and will was our redemption planned and wrought. "Be- 1 John iii. 1. hold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" Therefore let our adoring love flow back, an undivided stream.

Councils and synods may have issued their dark decrees, and stern divines have drawn up their inexorable formularies; but we are called upon by the authorized Ambassadors of God to listen to His own offer of reconciliation. Can

we charge either them or their message with any want of tenderness, as they announce it?—"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . . . Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

"But how," persists some objector, "can I honorably accept this? For I read further in this proposed treaty, and I find the ground of the offer, 'For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.' 2 Cor. v. 21. And why should the innocent suffer at all for the guilty, even if it be willingly? What justice is there in such terms?"

So far as we ourselves are concerned, it is *not* justice that we receive. Another has suffered for us—"being put to death"—"the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;" 1 Pet. iii. 18. and that which reaches us is something far higher than justice. It is *Mercy*. Do we, indeed, murmur at *that?* But as to the justice of God in itself, in permitting another to bear our penalty, who are we who talk so freely about *His* justice?—we, of whom scarcely can

two agree in adjusting its claims upon each other; we, of whom the wisest and the best find their perplexity the sorest to uphold securely Law and Order and Discipline, and yet escape the dangers of too severe a justice on the one hand, and too lax a mercy on the other; we, who find our forbearance to the guilty end in peril to the innocent; we, who own it the unsolved problem of all human governments, to keep the law armed with terror for the prevention of crime, while so softening it as to inspire the criminal with the hope of restoration. Yet this is the difficulty which has been met by the Gospel. Christ did, indeed, "magnify the law and make it honorable." And becoming both a Ransom and a Surety, so saved the sinner as to save him from his sin. The full terms of the offered treaty provide for this: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that *we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*"

2 Cor. v. 21.

We may comprehend it more or less clearly, but there is the Assurance, and these are the Signature and the Seal: "*A just God* and *a Saviour.*"

Rom. iii. 26.

"*Just* and the *Justifier* of him which *believeth in Jesus.*"

There are still others who call in question, not the nature of the sacrifice, but the need of any. And who are they who thus pass their futile sentence upon their Lawgiver and Judge but those who stand condemned before Him, cutting themselves off in their folly from all hope of His mercy, so long as they insolently challenge His justice? When once He comes, no more to offer mercy, but "to execute judgment"—not only on "ungodly deeds," but upon "Murmurers and Complainers" "for all their hard speeches" which these "ungodly sinners have spoken against Him"—then will their punishment be less because they have denied His right or will to decree it?

Jude 15, 16.

Proud and blind in their rebellion, or desperately deceived, shall these be reasoned with, and how? Yes, the Ambassadors are charged with a message even for such—honest but most compassionate—"Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." And the story comes down to us of one of them so earnest in his loyalty, so patient and so tender in his pity, that for "the space of three years he ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears," lest they also should

2 Cor. v. 11.

Acts xx. 31.

be misled. He feared the wolf without, ready to spring upon the flock—that "Church of God which He had purchased with His own blood." But even more He feared the treacherous shepherds within the fold;—the men of their own selves that should arise, "speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." And foreseeing it all, he passed on to us the charge, "Therefore watch!"

Acts xx. 29, 30.

And to this very day, they who watch are startled to hear, suddenly, in their midst and close beside them, the secret counsels of the foe.

No need of an atonement! No need of propitiation! No need to be pardoned, to be ransomed, to be redeemed! What fallen spirit in its fearful looking-for of judgment first dared the bold denial? Even he, whom Christ called so significantly, "A murderer from the beginning" and "A liar and the father of it." He purposed to destroy our life; and so he whispered as his first falsehood in the ear of Eve, "Ye shall not surely die." And still he would persuade his victims to whom life is so freely offered, "Ye are not surely dead." But we are dead—

John viii. 44.

Gen. iii. 4.

not asleep only, not sick only, but "dead in trespasses and sins,"—until Christ gives us life—until by a new birth we awake to righteousness. The actual position of humanity has been described in words full of deepest humiliation, and yet of highest hope. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." These are no fanatical words; no disagreeable phrases, contrived to frighten us; no old wives' fables, but the accurate diagnosis of Him who stands waiting to heal us. We refuse to listen at our peril. For, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "If we say that we have no sin, *we deceive ourselves*." Nor is this all. "If we say that we have not sinned, we *make Him a liar*."

Eph. ii. 1.
Eph. v. 14.
1 John iii. 8.
1 John i. 8-10.

The fall of man from his first estate, his loss of the image of God, his being thus overcome and brought into bondage under a cruel enemy; and our being thus "by nature the children of wrath," walking as "the children of disobedi-

ence," "according to the prince of the power of the air," and "according to the course of this world"—these are facts which the Holy Scriptures assert and assume throughout. Nor was it a partial overthrow of His temple, that called down its Builder from heaven, to place His strong shoulder beneath the sinking ruin, and to say, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it." For so it is written, "There is none righteous, *no not one*. . . . There is none that doeth good, *no not one*." True it is that we find still among these ruins, fragments of marvellous beauty, and what to our eyes seems purity, where the hand of the Restorer has not been seen to pass. But God is the judge. "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men." His eyes are purer, His eyelids search deeper than ours; and it becomes us to say—"Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." Accepting then his word, it is "proved both of Jews and Gentiles that they are *all under sin*" . . . . "that every mouth may be stopped, and *all the world* may become GUILTY BEFORE GOD."

Eph. ii. 1-3.

Ps. lxxv. 3.

Rom. iii. 10-12.

Rom. iii. 9-19.

In entire consistency with this, we find that to the Hebrews, already possessed of a formal and legal righteousness, there was proclaimed as the preliminary of faith, "Repentance from *dead works*." And so far were the Apostles from claiming any advantage in this respect over the more ungodly Gentiles, that with a singularly adroit exclusion of all self-righteous claims, they say, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, *we* shall be saved *even as they*."

Heb. vi. 1.

Acts xv. 11.

It is in keeping with the fatal deception that our sin is not deadly, that we should doubt or deny together, the power of Satan to destroy, and the power of the Saviour to save. They who explain away the very existence of the one, will naturally proceed to lower the character and the offices of the other. But once admitting the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and our peril of the wrath to come, and then it becomes no mere metaphor to us that "an Enemy hath done this;" and then, also, does such a sacrifice as that of the Saviour reveal itself as most needful and most reasonable. Christ crucified may be a stumbling-block to some, and foolishness to others. But they who are saved, and who stand with their

feet upon the rock, looking back into the horrible pit, and can see what a marvellous work it was to bring them up, these can behold in the cross of Christ both "the power of God" and "the wisdom of God." What seems the foolishness of God is wiser than men. Could the world have believed it to be wisdom, it would neither have crucified, nor would it now reject, the Lord of glory.

1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

And yet it is not for us to sound the unknown depth of those words, "It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings." How vain all speculative thought, as to why our release from suffering the penalty of sin should be purchased by His suffering beyond any of us all; as to why He who had all power in heaven and on earth should put himself unresistingly into the hands of evil men; as to why His divinity should humble itself to the straits and limits of our humanity. Even to them which are perfect, the wisdom of God is still spoken in a mystery. We know not the full wherefore; but the glorious fact itself is clear as

Heb. ii. 10.

1 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

the noonday. *He did it;* and did it by no sudden surprise, but in the calm fulfilment of the whole spirit of prophecy, as so clearly announced in the earliest of all—that He who, as the Seed of the woman, should bruise the serpent's head, must in so doing suffer that serpent to bruise *His* heel. The prophets felt the burden of the mystery, "Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." When Christ for the only time on earth assumed that majesty, which was like the coming in His kingdom, and there talked with Him Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, we are permitted one glimpse of the unutterable interests of that converse between the greatest of the prophets, thus reappearing after the lapse of ages: They "spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Nor is it a theme alone for prophets and for glorified saints to ponder: "These things the angels desire to look into."

Gen. iii. 15.

1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

Luke ix. 31.

1 Pet. i. 12.

What utter necessity there may have been for

the fulness of that cup of suffering we cannot know. "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee," was the prayer of Jesus in His hour of agony. And yet to His thrice repeated cry, "If it be possible," we find no other answer than an angel from heaven strengthening Him, and His own submissive going forth to the death of the Cross. The truth which is revealed is not whether it was for God the only way to save us, but that it is for us the only way to be saved. Enough for us that we can find in that Cross the strongest conceivable proof of our sin and our danger, and of His love and sure salvation. On His head are many crowns! What if there be one name written that no man knoweth but He himself!

Matt. xxvi. 39-46.

Rev. xix. 12.

Who is He, then? Among those many crowns which shall be held the highest and the brightest, while things on earth and things in heaven do homage to the name of Jesus? Prince of life and Captain of our salvation! casting out the prince of this world—the Deliverer from the enemy—redeeming man, and "ransoming him from the hand of him that was stronger than he;" proclaiming liberty, and opening the prison doors where the captives lay,

Jer. xxxi. 11.

bound, and bruised, and blind, and broken-hearted; proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, that is now, and the day of vengeance of our God, that shall be hereafter; healing, and comforting, and leading out all that would follow Him; bringing them over from that region of darkness and death to His own kingdom; redeemed, restored, reconciled, and made at one with God; renewed in His image again, His children and His heirs! Such was Jesus, the Saviour, the Redeemer!

Isa. lxi. 1-3. Luke iv. 16-21. Col. i. 12, 13.

How shall we give honor to Him who thus went forth "conquering and to conquer," and when again He ascended up on high led captivity captive, and gave His gifts to the rebellious? He who inspired His servants of old, and, when they were to speak of the things touching the King, gave them for a tongue the pen of a ready writer, has so ordered it that this greatest victory should be told in no cold or common speech, but in songs of praise and shouts of triumph, that burst from lips still warm with the live coal of the Seraphim.

Ps. xlv. 1.

"Sing, O daughter of Zion! shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daugh-

ter of Jerusalem! The Lord hath taken away thy judgments; He hath cast out thine enemy. The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more." Zeph. iii. 14, 15.

"I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins. Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." Isa. xliv. 22, 23.

And so let the redeemed of the Lord, "whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy," take up the song of Moses, and turn it to a song for their Deliverer—"Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. . . . Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. . . . Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance—in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for *Thee* to dwell in!" Ex. xv. 1-21.

IX.

AND this is His name whereby He shall be called, *The Lord our Righteousness.*" In this rapid survey of the work of the Redeemer, there are some aspects which have been hurried past. Two of these especially have been often mistaken and confused, for the simple reason that they are the slightly varied views of one and the same truth, placed side by side, and requiring to be seen *together*, if we would bring out their lifelike faithfulness. The closing of an eye on one must dim the other. Thus the righteousness of Christ that through His death cancels the debt of sin, and the righteousness of Christ that through His life becomes our real possession, are inseparably bound together by that Title Deed which conveys to us "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The righteousness that is imputed and the righteousness that is imparted are all of one.

Jer. xxiii. 6.

The Bride that brings to her Heavenly Bride-

groom no dowry but a hopeless debt, however unspeakably humbled, is saved from all her fears. Every claim of the past she can and must refer to Him, as "the Lord her Righteousness." And for all her present needs she has no wealth to draw upon save His, who delights, as she well knows, to have her "glorious within and her clothing of wrought gold." Giving her to the half of His kingdom, His very name is hers; for "this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called: The Lord our Righteousness." She may sometimes waste His treasures: she may sometimes fail in her full love and duty; but not "for every cause" will He put her away.

Jer. xxxiii. 16.

And constantly in the Holy Scriptures do these truths pass over the one more or less into the other. Few, indeed, are those portions where we fail to find the overlapping edge. As an instance, let us take those two representations of the same Apostle—two and yet one: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, *to declare His righteousness* for

the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This presents chiefly His righteousness for the past; now for the future: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, *that we might be made the righteousness* of God in Him." So also that passage already referred to, which so emphatically excludes the thought that we are *saved* by works of righteousness which we have done, is supplemented by another which follows immediately: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to *maintain* good works." And again we find both views united in a single period, as in those tender and appealing words, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." And yet it is the dying to sins first, the living to righteousness afterward; the healing first, and then the health.

Rom. iii. 23–26.

2 Cor. v. 21.

Titus iii. 8.

1 Peter ii. 24.

For while these fellow-truths lie so closely and inseparably side by side, there can be no question that the one precedes the other, even if it be in itself the lesser truth. "If," says an Apostle, "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, *being reconciled*, we shall be saved by His life." And by all the unspeakable blessings of health, and strength, and full stature, and perfect soundness, will our interest centre upon the point of healing—the passing from death unto life. Birth will ever remain a greater marvel than existence; and "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

Rom. v. 10.

Luke xv. 7.

X.

THEY shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us." Matt. i. 23. In that body which was prepared for Him, He appeared but once. But He is Emmanuel still. For forty days Jesus showed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs; Acts i. 3. and then from the midst of His disciples, gathered together upon Olivet, "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Acts i. 9, 12. But two great and precious promises were first given to His people. The two men in white apparel gave the one: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven"— Acts i. 11. the same promise that was confirmed so solemnly afterward: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Rev. i. 7.

Even so, Amen." The other promise, their support and comfort until then, Jesus Himself gave but a little before: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Even in giving the promise of the Spirit—"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever"—how tenderly did He teach them to identify this new gift with Himself: "I will not leave you comfortless: *I* will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." Yet even such sayings as these, have been wrested and shaped into one of the most subtle of errors—an error that numbers among its adherents less deceivers than deceived. And there may be not a few who miss that stand-point where we can best behold the fulness of Christ, not so much by wilfully stopping short of it, as by anxiously passing too far beyond it. We have now to consider such questions as these: Is it not said, that "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more?" Instead of dwelling so much upon a work accomplished so long ago, ought we not

Matt. xxviii. 20.

John xiv. 16.

John xiv. 18, 19.

rather to look to the Holy Spirit and His work in our hearts now, abide under His teachings, mind the Light, follow our Guide, and thus know a present manifestation of God in the temple of the soul—Christ in us, our hope of Glory? Why should we seek the living among the dead? And thus, even while opening a hand to receive this added gift, the other hand loosens its hold upon the old treasure. Too often the truths once formally admitted, and still it may be retaining their place in some abstract summary of doctrine, are virtually laid aside as of no practical value—things to be looked at, but not used; armor which it is well to hang upon our walls, but which we have no need to wear. There is indeed no little force in such objections when directed against those who lay a foundation, but fail to build. But what if, in building higher ourselves, we meanwhile so hide our chief Corner-Stone that others thinking to follow our faith forget even to lay it!

Again, what saith the Scripture? Or rather let us ask, How has the Spirit of God, as speaking through those pages, set forth His own work, and what is the relation which it bears to the work of Christ?

"It is expedient for you that I go away," said Jesus; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." "He will guide you into all truth." "He shall teach you all things." Why expedient? What was He to teach them? Why did Christ send Him? Was it to draw the mind away from Him to a new object of faith? Was it to set aside *His* work as a thing of the past?—to teach other words than those of which He had said, "My words shall not pass away"? Let us read over those promises: "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever *I* have said unto you." "He shall testify of *me*." "He shall take of *mine*, and shall show it unto you." "He shall glorify *me*." As surely then as we are taught by the Spirit, we are taught the things of Christ. Has a prophet set forth the blessedness of being "taught of God"—the "great peace," the "righteousness," and the safety, that are thus found by His children as "their heritage?" Then Jesus has also shown us the first result of being so

John xvi. 7, 13.

John xiv. 26.

John. xiv. 26.

John xv. 26.

John xvi. 15.

John xvi. 14.

Isa. liv. 13-17.

taught, and the true channel of all these blessings; for He said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father *cometh unto me.*" Jesus declared that this Spirit of Truth was to "reprove the world of sin;" but He added, "Of sin, because they believed not on me." The Holy Spirit is represented as striving with man, reproving him, knocking at the door, inviting him, drawing him; but is never spoken of as *abiding* in any heart until that heart belongs to Christ. And the gift was sure to follow upon that faith, as we may plainly infer from the reverse saying: "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." The divine order in the knowledge of Christ is this: "In whom ye trusted, *after that ye heard* the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, *after that ye believed*, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." To His disciples, and "not unto the world," did Christ promise this new manifestation* in words

John vi. 45.

John xvi. 8, 9.

Rom. viii. 9.

Eph. i. 13.

* A much-abused passage, 1 Cor. xii. 7, is no exception to this. The context plainly shows that the Apostle

that link together in inseparable unity Father, Son and Holy Spirit: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

John xiv. 22, 23.

What shall we answer, then, to all those who claim to have found more light, by looking away from Him who said, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," and who claim to be more spiritual, by leaving behind them the work of Christ in the flesh? We will answer with the prophet—"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We will answer with the Apostle—"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus

John viii. 12.

Isa. viii. 20.

1 John iv. 2, 3.

was speaking only of believers, and the gifts which they received for the profit of the one body. The words might be closely rendered: "*To each* is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." It will be readily seen how this accords with what follows: "to one," "to another," etc.

Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. And this is that spirit of Antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come." It is not the bare assent of the understanding to a fact that is here demanded, but that *with the heart* we should believe unto righteousness, and then with the mouth make confession unto salvation. Rom. x. 8-10.

No! the work of Christ in the flesh is never to loosen its hold on our remembrance, or to slide from its place in our faith and our affections. Never can we hope, through mere obedience to duty (as if it were the sole office of the Spirit to reveal this), to become the children of God. There must be the obedience of faith first. "*This* is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." John vi. 29. 1 John v. 1.

Never may we dare to claim any real victory over the world without this faith: "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" To Him, and not to any gift, or power, or principle apart from Him, are we directed for life and strength. Still with us, as He is, even 1 John v. 5.

unto the end of the world, His word is, "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . I am the Vine; ye are the branches. Without me ye can do nothing."

John xv. 4, 5.

And yet it is made equally certain that the power of the Holy Spirit is essential to the very life of our souls, and to every step of our spiritual progress. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

1 Cor. xii. 3.

Rom. viii. 14.

The uniting link is easily found. The promise, "He shall take of mine and show it unto you," covers not the words which He spoke only, but the entire truth as it is in Jesus—His life, His death, His resurrection, His nature, His work—Himself in His fulness. All this is summed up in a comprehensive term, used in a sense not far removed from that in which Jesus was personally called "The Word"—a lower sense, and yet akin to it—"the word," "the word of faith," "the word of His grace," "the word preached," "the ingrafted word," "*the word of the truth of the Gospel.*" And here also we find the harmony of expressions which sometimes seem

at variance. We are to be born of the Spirit; but it is also said that we are begotten by the word of truth, "being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God . . the word which by the Gospel is preached." We are told both of the "baptism of the Holy Ghost," and of the "washing of water by the word." We are to be sanctified by the Spirit, and yet Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy *word* is truth." "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God;" but only as it is wielded by such a hand can it be said, "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."

James i. 18.

1 Pet. i. 23-25.

John xvii. 17.

Eph. vi. 17.

Heb. iv. 12.

And so also it is through the presence and power of the Spirit, that the life of Jesus in the flesh and the shedding of His blood, meet our daily and continuous need as our "Bread of Life." Through one of the simplest yet closest analogies, has our Lord taught us the constant appropriation of His life and death. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." . . "My flesh is meat indeed, and my

John vi. 53-57.

blood is drink indeed." . . . "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Rebuking the gross misapprehension of His hearers, Jesus taught that this bread of life could only be given and received spiritually. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

John vi. 63.

Thus the work of the Spirit blends harmoniously with the work of Christ—distinct, and yet separated by no abrupt line of division. The one great object of faith set before us is Jesus Christ. The awakening, life-giving and transforming power within us is His Spirit. And so it comes to pass that "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2 Cor. iii. 18.

XI.

"JESUS CHRIST, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," is an announcement followed by a charge which is evidently founded upon it: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." There is still another weapon that has been forged out of the Scriptures for the overthrow of the Truth. Some, who do not question how the Gospel was at first revealed, are found claiming that it is subject to change; and that we may enjoy now a more perfect revelation through the Spirit, than the primitive believers were prepared for. They rest this claim upon those words of Christ which precede the promise of the Spirit as a guide to all truth: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Heb. xiii. 8, 9.

John xvi. 12.

Unquestionably Christian practice admits of development and change. The Gospel is not a

collection of precise forms and minute directions. It does not propose to chisel out for us rows of perfect statues, but to give us armies of living men—laborers for our harvest-fields—adapted variously to the age they live in, and the work which is assigned them. The laws of life and health, the laws of perfect growth and full service, are, indeed, most jealously guarded; but in minor matters, a large authority and power of judgment is entrusted to the Church, under the control and direction of the Head of the Church. For guidance in his own special path of duty, the believer must rest on that broad promise: "I will guide thee with mine eye." But this is not our question—Is "the word of the truth of the Gospel" to change? Abundant space there is, indeed, both in our individual lives, and from one generation to another, to grow in *knowledge*—to *understand* and to *apply*, under ever-changing circumstances, that which has been once revealed. But as to the Truth itself, that promised Spirit of Truth came *then*, and was given to *the Apostles*, largely and miraculously, for their all-important work in the Church of Christ. And so it is still the one unchangeable Truth—"the

Ps. xxxii. 8.

everlasting Gospel" — "the great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Heb. ii. 3, 4.
If any claim another revelation, fuller and more perfect, where is the confirmation, and how does God bear them witness?

That which the Apostle Paul declared was "all the counsel of God." The Gospel of Christ, which he preached, had been taught him by revelation; and he spake thus of those who perverted it: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." It was no hasty speech, for he solemnly repeats it: "As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." And that other Apostle, whose heart was so full of love, says, in words scarcely less strong, "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, Gal. i. 12. Gal. i. 8, 9.

receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

2 John 9, 10.

Who is He, then, as preached by the Apostles, when in their ministry was at last set forth the things which Jesus did not say, because they could not yet be borne? In the Acts of the Apostles, and in their Epistles, we shall find our answer. And turning now from further consideration of doubts and objections, to a more positive presentation of truth, let us listen to a simple summary of their teaching.

In the first discourse of Peter after his baptism by the Holy Ghost—a discourse which resulted in adding about three thousand souls to the number of believers—he dwells mainly upon the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and the subsequent gift of the Holy Spirit: "This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses;" "*He* hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear:" "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Again, after the healing of the lame man at the gate of the Temple. he proclaimed the same facts: "Ye denied the Holy One and Just;" "Ye killed the

Acts ii. 32-36.

Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead;" "And His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong whom ye see and know." And then, filled with the Holy Ghost, he said unto the rulers and elders: "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Again, we find the same Apostle pleading before the council: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israël, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him." And then departing from the council, "daily in the Temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." So, also, we follow Philip in the city of Samaria, and in the Ethiopian chariot; and we find that he "preached

Acts iii. 14–16.

Acts iv. 8–12.

Acts v. 30–32.

Acts v. 42.

Acts viii. 5, 35.

Christ" — "preached Jesus." A devout and God-fearing man, Cornelius, is charged by an angel to send for Peter, "who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." What words, then, did Peter speak? "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ"— words which tell what Jesus of Nazareth did and suffered, and that ended thus: "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." And while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word; for they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts x. 1-48.
Acts xi. 1-18.

Such was the witness of those who could say, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, . . . declare we unto you."

1 John i. 1-3.

And now another witness, by whom He was seen last of all, beholds at mid-day a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, and hears the voice of his Lord, saying, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." It is told him by Ananias what he

Acts xxii. 8, 9.

must do: "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of His mouth; for thou shalt be His witness." Acts ix. 20. "And straightway he preached Christ." How does he preach Him? We hear him at Antioch, in Pisidia, saying, "God hath raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." "We declare unto you glad tidings—how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again." "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.'" Acts xiii. 23-41. We hear him, in his prison at Philippi, preaching the same Gospel to the trembling jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be Acts xvi. 31.

saved." We follow him to Thessalonica, and we find him in a synagogue of the Jews for three Sabbath days, reasoning with them out of the Scriptures, "opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." We go on to Athens, where they deem him "a setter-forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." And we hear him upon Mars' Hill, making known their unknown God, and that man by whom He will judge the world, "whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead." At Corinth, pressed in spirit, he testifies to the Jews that Jesus is Christ. And referring to this visit in his first Epistle to them, he says, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." And again, "I delivered unto you, *first of all*, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures;" and this he declared as "the Gospel

Acts xvii. 2, 3.

Acts xvii. 18, 31.

Acts xviii. 5.

1 Cor. ii. 2.

which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." 1 Cor. xv. 1–4.

In his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, he thus reviews his ministry: "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying . . . repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts xx. 20, 21. And finally we see him at Rome, bound with his chain, with many Jews around him in his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, "persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening." Acts xxviii. 23. And in the last record of the now aged Apostle, as he dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, we find him still "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts xxviii. 31.

Such was the preaching which was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Such was

1 Cor. i. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 11. the preaching by which "it pleased God to save them that believed." So they preached and so they believed. Do we the same? There is none other Gospel for any to preach, or for any to believe. And though there were, and even an angel preached it, he would be accursed.

And turning now to the Epistles, we find in what manner the Apostles sought to strengthen the churches, that they might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To "keep in memory these things, to have them always in remembrance," was their charge. And they never rest satisfied with present effort. There is to be a constant reaching forth to things before, an unwearied pressing toward the mark. The "Believe only" of the Gospel is shown to be a most comprehensive belief, and the faith in Christ Jesus a continuous faith. Again and again they recur to the blessed truth, "Christ died for us," and set forth its abiding and controlling influence upon the entire life of the Christian. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,

but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." We might take these words as the key-note of their whole teaching. Let any one glance rapidly over those pages, and especially the shorter Epistles, and see how often, blended sometimes with the name of the Father, and yet as frequently alone, he meets the words, "Christ," "Jesus Christ," "our Lord Jesus Christ." They repeat it often in a single sentence, far beyond the requirements of a clear meaning, as a name they love—a name whose very sound is dear, and whose very mention should have power in it. In their most practical exhortations, as well as in all doctrines, they find a starting-point and a goal, their motive, their encouragement, their final object, in Jesus Christ. Seated in heavenly places, and blessed with all spiritual blessings, accepted in the Beloved, still they say, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." They are in Christ Jesus, and He in them. Their life is "hid with Christ in God." They are to be rooted in Christ; they are to be built up upon Christ. Their bodies are the members of Christ, and Christ is their Head. They are complete in

2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Eph. i. 3-7.

Christ. They do all in the name of Christ, all for the sake of Christ, all from the love of Christ, all through the strength of Christ, all in the hope of Christ. "Christ is all and in all." And how all His blessed attributes are sometimes gathered up in one full accord of rejoicing and of praise, as when they say, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" To them to live was Christ, and yet a thing far better was "to depart and be with Christ." The joy of heaven itself was this, that when Christ who was their life should appear, then they also should "appear with Him in glory." One glorious revelation triumphed over all the dimness of the future—"*We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*"

Rom. viii. 34, 35.

Col. iii. 4.

1 John iii. 2.

What marvel then if, at the close of one of his Epistles, an Apostle of Christ should write deliberately with his own hand* one more awful anathema. He who preached another Gospel,

* As his autograph postscript—the main Epistle being no doubt written by an amanuensis. See 2 Thess. iii. 17.

and he who received not that Gospel in faith and love, are alike accursed. For even so must it be "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

XII.

WHO is He, hast thou asked? Almost may it be said, with such a record setting forth His glory, and proclaiming Him with all the accordant voices of His witnesses: "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." Oh, that there may indeed have been, while we have thus communed together and reasoned, another drawing nigh as He did to His two disciples of old—Himself opening the Scriptures, till thy heart, like theirs, has burned within thee, till thine eyes have been opened, and thou hast known Him; yet not as then to vanish out of thy sight, but to hold thine eyes henceforward, "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of thy faith."

Luke xxiv. 13-32.

Heb. xii. 2.

For in this Gospel of Christ there is set before us no mere theory, no cold and dead abstractions, but *an adorable Person;* and we are shown the actual relation existing between each believing soul and an ever-living Saviour. To one who

has been brought into this blessed union with Him, there is no room for doubt. The evidence of the Scriptures, and the witness of the Spirit, the exact supply of all our felt needs in the all-sufficiency of His grace, which rightfully constitutes our experience,—these make the realities of faith as sure though unseen, as are the things that are seen. When the soul has learned to believe in Jesus, and to love Him, it can trust Him for all difficulties. Surely of such a love, beyond any other, is it true that it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;" and so quietly waits till that which is perfect is come, and that which is in part shall be done away.

1 Cor. xiii. 7 10.

The hand that now traces these words has in days long past, written other words of doubt and unbelief. The heart that now yearns with an intense longing over you who are tempted in like manner, once feared to call Jesus, Lord, and to put its faith and hope in Him; and searched in vain with blinded eyes, through the whole volume of Inspiration, to find one single convincing proof of His Divinity, and the Atonement which He made for sinners. Let the humiliating record stand, if it may possibly per-

suade any who have said, "We see," to ask now of Him who came that they which see not might see—"Are we blind also?" A man that is called Jesus anointed those eyes; and God hath shined in that heart, to give it the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Such unbelief could never satisfy the soul. The pride of reason was strong; but it could not stay the craving for peace, for nearness, for love, for communion; and these could not be found till they were found at the cross of Christ.

John ix. 39–41.

2 Cor. iv. 6.

What did He to thee? How opened He thine eyes? is the question that some will surely ask. And this brings us to that point where so many stumble and grope perplexed—the personal appropriation of the gospel to our own souls. To the early Christians these truths were told as a new thing. They heard the word, they believed, and "passed from death unto life." But what of those who have been familiar with it all their days? Have they no need to scale the heavens above, or to go down into the depths beneath? No, the word is nigh them, "the word of faith." He who has so freely provided for us

John v. 24.

Rom. x. 6–8.

this glorious Gospel of our salvation, knowing our utter helplessness, has brought it so nigh to us that there is to the willing heart but one step to reach our Saviour—*our faith.* And even for the taking of this one needful step, He holds out His own hand to aid us, and offers us the very faith which He requires of us. The necessity of a power beyond our own, the agency of the Holy Spirit, is never presented to us in the Holy Scriptures as a hindrance, but always as the *ready help.* The necessity of prayer is never in any wise described as a barrier, but always as *an open door of access.*

How opened He thine eyes? The blindness was first *confessed;* and then all followed as it did with him who cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" and who through every hindrance cried so much the more, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." The heart-felt prayer, "Lord, that I may receive my sight," must, so surely as He is true, be followed by His ready word of power: "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee."—"Immediately he received his sight." For the way of Truth and Faith is short. The way of error and unbelief is long.

Luke xviii. 35-43.

XIII.

WHO is He that thou mayest believe? Yes, truly thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. Thou hast seen Him in that human life—upon this very earth; seen Him in all those mighty deeds, in all those meek and gentle ways, in all those loving, gracious words; seen Him as He hungered, and thirsted, and was tempted, and prayed, and wept, as man; seen Him as by a power that belongs to God alone, he provided bread for thousands, made wine for the wedding feast, cast out the Tempter from the troubled demoniacs, answered prayer, and gave back to the weeping sisters their four-days' dead; seen Him as He was born, and lived, and died, and rose again. The record is before thee, and One is near thee, to open both the Scriptures and thy understanding, that thou mayest understand the Scriptures.

Luke xxiv. 32, 45.

And thou hast heard His voice—"A still small voice." It has whispered in thine ears the

words He once spoke on earth. How it thrilled upon thy troubled, doubting heart as it said, "Ye believe in God, *believe also in* ME." How it wellnigh drew thee to Him as it said, "*Come unto* ME." How it almost made the cross He asked thee to bear for Him seem light, when such an one as He, bearing His own cross, said, "*Follow thou* ME." How its tender tones stirred up in thy heart the very affection it called for, as it said, again and again, "*Lovest thou* ME?" How it half constrained thee to a willing obedience, as it said also, "*If ye love* ME, keep my commandments." How it fell upon the faltering pauses of thy prayer, with a promise of new power, "If ye shall ask anything *in* MY *Name*, *I will do it*." Behold Him, then! Say unto Him, "Lord, I believe!" Yes, "worship Him"—bowing where "all the angels of God" have bowed before. Heb. i. 6.

Receive His pardon, His peace. Receive His Holy Spirit. Give Him the full faith of a trusting soul. Give Him the love of thy whole heart, and a life-long obedience. Fix also thy hope on Him, even "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." Titus ii. 13.

And say, as thou art "crucified with Christ" to a world that lieth in wickedness, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Say to Him, as thy "earnest expectation" waiteth for that other coming in His glory, and thou hearest His promise—the last He left thee—"Surely I come quickly, Even so come, Lord Jesus." Or, falling asleep, if so He wills it, thou canst say to Him, as to One not only known and loved, but proved as the "Faithful and True," "Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit." And then, oh then, with the angels round about the throne—the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"—thou wilt say, "with a loud voice,"

Gal. ii. 20.

Rev. xxii. 20.

Rev. v. 12.

WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN
TO RECEIVE POWER AND RICHES,
AND WISDOM AND STRENGTH,
AND HONOR AND GLORY,
AND BLESSING.